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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - Ambassador Speaks With Somaliland President
Riyale

REF: Nairobi 2030

Summary

11. (SBU) On September 29, Ambassador Ranneberger spoke by phone with Somaliland President Dahir Riyale Kahin. The Ambassador underscored the U.S.-Somaliland partnership and emphasized that by throwing out the voter registration list and the allowing violence to escalate, including the killing of four protestors, Somaliland is undermining its efforts to be a free and democratic state. The Ambassador urged the Somaliland President to ensure that elections occur as soon as possible and promised U.S. assistance, if necessary, with the process. Riyale said he highly valued the relationship with the U.S. and looks forward to increased engagement to strengthen the rule of law and undermine efforts by al-Shabaab to gain a foothold. He said he would support the six-point agreement and the efforts to move the electoral process forward, including revising the voter registration list and changing the leadership of the National Electoral Commission. Riyale stated that he stand for free and fair elections and a smooth transition. The Ambassador and Riyale promised to continue dialogue and speak regularly about progress on the presidential elections. End summary.

Re-Engagement and Frank Dialogue

12. (SBU) In a September 29 phone call with Somaliland President Dahir Riyale Kahin, the Ambassador noted that the U.S.-Somaliland partnership was based on shared democratic values and mutual concerns, including fighting terrorism. The Ambassador told Riyale that by throwing out the voter registration list and allowing violence to escalate, including the killing of four protestors on September 12, Somaliland was undermining its efforts to become a free and democratic state. The Ambassador noted the importance of all parties not just agreeing to the six-point framework, but making efforts to break the current impasse. He urged the Somaliland President to play his role in ensuring that elections occur as soon as possible and promised U.S. assistance, if necessary, with the process.

13. (SBU) Riyale said he highly valued the relationship with the U.S. and looked forward to joint efforts to strengthen rule of law and undermine efforts by al-Shabaab to gain a foothold in the region. Riyale apologized for any misunderstanding that may have tested relations and told the Ambassador that he would like to have regular communication about electoral progress and current events. About the September 25 Guurti decision, Riyale said that it was he

who had urged the Guurti not to unilaterally extend his term in office. Riyale told the Ambassador that there were many groups which had exerted pressure on the Guurti to do otherwise. The next steps, Riyale said, would be technical rather than political and begin with the signing of the six-point agreement, which he believed would happen on September 30.

Stated Commitment to the Electoral Process

¶4. (SBU) Riyale told the Ambassador he would like to finalize issues concerning the election as soon as possible. He said he would abide by the six-point agreement and join efforts to move the electoral process forward, including revising the voter registration list and changing the leadership of the National Electoral Commission. He told the Ambassador that he was looking forward to the arrival of "qualified and credible" international experts to help the NEC set a timeline on the way forward. The Ambassador said that with the re-constitution of the NEC, the U.S. was prepared to help Somaliland achieve its goal of a free and fair election.

¶5. (SBU) Riyale emphasized that, although he works in a "difficult place," he stands for free and fair elections and a smooth transition. He acknowledged that if the elections were not good, Somaliland could be destabilized. The Ambassador assured the Somaliland President that if he fulfills his pledge to support free-and-fair elections, the U.S. would support Somaliland throughout the electoral process. The Ambassador and the Somaliland President promised to speak regularly about progress on the presidential elections and other issues of mutual concern.

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Comment

¶6. (SBU) In our first direct communication with Riyale since August, the Somaliland President said all the right things. The fact that he claimed credit for the Guurti decision that diffused the political crisis demonstrates that Riyale is willing to nominally support any politically expedient initiative. The Office of the President reached out to the Somalia Unit immediately following the September 25 Guurti decision. Riyale's emphasis on the U.S.-Somaliland partnership again demonstrated that we have considerable leverage. The Ambassador will engage frequently with Riyale and we will explore additional ways to encourage a closer relationship with Somaliland in order to foster democratic development and continued relative stability.

RANNEBERGER